Fuvahmulah, Gnaviyani Atoll: a complete island guide

Fuvahmulah, Gnaviyani Atoll

A single island that is its own atoll, granted city status by presidential decree on 4 June 2017 and governed by a mayor and seven councillors, one per ward. Islanders speak their own dialect, Fuvahmulaki baha. The name comes from the areca nut, fuvah. Former President Ibrahim Nasir was born here.

ISLAND
Fuvahmulah

ATOLL
Gnaviyani Atoll

NEAREST AIRPORT
Fuvahmulah (FVM)

ATOLL CAPITAL
Fuvahmulah

CURRENCY
Maldivian Rufiyaa

LANGUAGE
Dhivehi, English widely used

Complete travel guide - 2026 / 2027 Edition

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Your complete guide to Fuvahmulah, Gnaviyani Atoll

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1. WELCOME TO FUVAHMULAH

A single island that is its own atoll, granted city status by presidential decree on 4 June 2017 and governed by a mayor and seven councillors, one per ward. Islanders speak their own dialect, Fuvahmulaki baha. The name comes from the areca nut, fuvah. Former President Ibrahim Nasir was born here.

Thoondu beach at the northern tip is covered in smooth shiny white pebbles found nowhere else in the Maldives, and hundreds of people visit daily; the annual Bissaaveli phenomenon there forms a natural shallow swimming pool. Kalho-Akiri, the Black Pebbles, lies on the southeast shore. Two freshwater lakes, Dhadimagi Kilhi and Bandaara Kilhi, sit inside the island with wetlands and marshes around them, and the common moorhen is found nowhere else in the country. Historic sites include the Havitta, the Vasho-Veyo stone bath, and the Gen, Hukuru and Kedeyre mosques.

The largest mango producer in the Maldives, and the only place in the country growing pineapples and oranges. Farmland yields cucumber, tomato, carrot, cabbage, pepper, aubergine and okra, and there are taro fields. Fishing, retail and office work make up the rest, with boatbuilding at the Neregando anchorage.

2. ESSENTIAL FACTS

Atoll	Gnaviyani Atoll (GN)
Population	9,166 resident (2022 census), including 1,278 foreign residents
Size	4.94 km², about 4.5 km by 1.2 km - the third largest island in the Maldives
Distance from Malé	494 km south of Malé
Atoll capital	Fuvahmulah
Nearest airport	Fuvahmulah (FVM)
Language	Dhivehi; English is widely understood where there are guesthouses
Religion	Sunni Islam. This is an inhabited island, so alcohol is not sold and modest dress is expected away from the tourist beach.
Currency	Maldivian Rufiyaa (MVR); US dollars are accepted by most guesthouses
Time zone	UTC+5, no daylight saving

3. GETTING THERE

The island has no lagoon and is exposed to ocean swell, which made it hard to reach for centuries. A harbour was built at the southeast tip in the early 2000s, and the airstrip on the southeastern side has been running since 11 November 2011 with two scheduled flights a day each way to Malé.

Reaching Gnaviyani Atoll from Malé: no ferry from Malé; fly to Fuvahmulah in about 85 min, or fly to Addu and take the Highway Link ferry.

4. HISTORY AND HERITAGE

The island holds the Fua Mulaku Havitta, a ruined Buddhist stupa about 40 feet high, and Gen Miskit, said to be the oldest mosque in the Maldives at around 1300. It was reportedly emptied and resettled three times in the last thousand years because of epidemics, and it took part in the breakaway United Suvadive Republic of 1959 to 1963.

5. WHAT THERE IS FOR VISITORS

Thoondu beach at the northern tip is covered in smooth shiny white pebbles found nowhere else in the Maldives, and hundreds of people visit daily; the annual Bissaaveli phenomenon there forms a natural shallow swimming pool. Kalho-Akiri, the Black Pebbles, lies on the southeast shore. Two freshwater lakes, Dhadimagi Kilhi and Bandaara Kilhi, sit inside the island with wetlands and marshes around them, and the common moorhen is found nowhere else in the country. Historic sites include the Havitta, the Vasho-Veyo stone bath, and the Gen, Hukuru and Kedeyre mosques.

6. HOW THE ISLAND LIVES

The largest mango producer in the Maldives, and the only place in the country growing pineapples and oranges. Farmland yields cucumber, tomato, carrot, cabbage, pepper, aubergine and okra, and there are taro fields. Fishing, retail and office work make up the rest, with boatbuilding at the Neregando anchorage.

7. ON THE ISLAND

A hospital, upgraded from a health centre in 2001. Eleven schools - six preschools, one primary, three secondary and one A-Level. Harbour, airport, police station, fire and rescue service, market, post office, a Bank of Maldives branch, an STO branch, youth and social centres, and the largest cricket ground in the Maldives.

8. BEFORE YOU GO

A single large island with a real town. No alcohol. Fuvahmulah has a distinct dialect and identity - it is culturally its own place, not a generic Maldivian island.

Inhabited islands follow local rules rather than resort rules. Swimwear belongs on the designated tourist beach only, alcohol is not sold, and shops and offices pause for about fifteen minutes at each of the five daily prayers.

Bring cash in small notes. Card acceptance is patchy outside the larger islands, and not every island has

an ATM.

9. WHEN TO VISIT

Tiger sharks year-round; February to April is driest

10. AROUND THE ATOLL

This island is part of Gnaviyani Atoll. The atoll guide covers every inhabited island and every resort island in it, how the ferries run, and what the atoll is known for.

Everything in this guide is bookable with local Maldivian operators.

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